



- Explore the regions -

Where Rich History Meets Contemporary

The Kansai region comprises the six prefectures of Osaka, Kyoto, Hyogo, Nara, Shiga, and Wakayama. As Nara and Kyoto helped shape Japan's history more than a thousand years ago, they are teeming with historical sites as well as various shrines and temples. Along with its rich past, the Kansai region has flourished as the economic hub of western Japan.

Osaka Pref.

Entertaining Haven of History, Culture, and Food

Osaka, with its Kansai International Airport, is the gateway to the Kansai region. The biggest city after Tokyo, Osaka is jam-packed with history, culture, and entertainment. Its fame for gourmet dining is reflected in its nickname: *kuidaore no machi* ("eat-till-you-drop town"). The bustling areas of Umeda, Namba, and Shinsaibashi have unique characteristics, and it is quite enjoyable just to stroll through each area and enjoy their attractions.



Nightlife scene at Dotonbori. © Osaka Convention & Tourism Bureau.

Kyoto Pref.

Famous Ancient Capital

The Kyoto area is known for being one of the world's most visited tourist destinations. The city of Kyoto, site of Japan's ancient capital, is essentially the center of the country's history and culture with many World Heritage sites. While *geiko* and *maiko* in Gion, and impressive Kinkakuji temple and Fushimi Inari shrine offer glimpses into a compelling past, Kyoto is also a leader in Japanese pop culture features like anime and games.



Yasaka Pagoda, seen from Kiyomizu-zaka, a slope of traditional shops leading to Kiyomizu-dera temple.

Hyogo Pref.

International Feel and Gorgeous Nightscape

With its history as a treaty port, Kobe became a settlement for foreigners, and given the many Western-style buildings and Chinatown, it's considered the most fashionable town in Kansai for its international feel. With other prefecture highlights like the World Heritage site of Himeji Castle plus Arima and Kinosaki hot springs for a relaxing soak, Hyogo has much to offer for veteran traveler and for first-time traveler alike.



A boat plies the sunlit waters of Kobe Harborland. © Kobe Tourism Bureau.

Looking Ahead

The next theme of Get to Know Kansai is "Sporting Experiences," set for October, when we feature hang gliding in Wakayama Pref. and cycling around Lake Biwa in Shiga Pref.

Handy URL

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Nara Pref.

Streetscape Hints of History and Culture

A major metropolis more than 1,200 years ago and home to many shrines, temples, and architectural remains including tumuli, Nara offers rewarding perspectives into Japanese history. Another synonymous attraction of Nara is its deer, said to be tame and used to humans, so do grab a “deer rice cracker” to feed them but be ready to be approached, often with a palpable nudge.



Deer in Nara Park.

Shiga Pref.

The Many Pleasures of Lake Biwa

Shiga Prefecture is home to Lake Biwa, which is Japan’s largest freshwater lake and named for the traditional lute its shape resembles. The surface area is actually one-sixth the size of the prefecture! On the lake are pleasure boat services and other lake activities, much like a beach resort’s. Around its shores are Hikone Castle as well as the Koka region, with its old ninja houses, both also popular with tourists.



Biwako Ohashi Bridge, Lake Biwa.

Wakayama Pref.

Giant Pandas and Pilgrimage Trail

Wakayama Prefecture, facing the Pacific Ocean, has a mild climate and rugged mountains. The greatest highlight of Adventure World, along the southern coast, in Nanki Shirahama, is its panda family. To the east is the sacred site containing the three great shrines of Kumano Sanzan, one of three peninsular areas (including Yoshino-Omine and Koyasan) inscribed as a World Heritage site and a key node of Kumano Kodo, a pilgrimage trail linked to Kyoto.



Hayatama Taisha Grand Shrine, one of three shrines of Kumano Sanzan, a World Heritage site. Source: Wakayama Tourism Federation.

Seasonal Events and Attractions

Spring

Omizutori (Nara Pref., Mar.)
Nagahama Hikiyama Festival (Shiga Pref., Apr.)

Summer

Gion Matsuri (Kyoto Pref., July)
Nachi no Ogi Matsuri (Wakayama Pref., July)

Tsuribashi Festival “Yuredaiko” (Nara Pref., Aug.)
Mantosai Lantern Festival (Shiga Pref., Aug.)

Autumn

Danjiri Festival (Osaka Pref., Oct.)
Jidai Matsuri (Kyoto Pref., Oct.)

Nada Kenka Matsuri (Hyogo Pref., Oct.)

Winter

Osaka Gishi Festival (Osaka Pref., Dec.)
Kuruma Otoshi Shrine “Okinamai” (Hyogo Pref., Jan.)
Kumano Oto Matsuri (Wakayama Pref., Feb.)

Convenient Access

Getting to and around the Kansai region couldn’t be easier, with three airports served by ANA and many direct flights from

airports around Japan. Flight time from Tokyo, for example, is a little over 1 hour.

